Haidee – the 1850 York Settlers' Ship

Gavin D Peckham, April 2026

This Painting

In a letter written in 1951, Alvar Mastins of Chestnut Cottage, Hessle, East Yorkshire, England, states that he is in possession of the only known painting of the *Haidee*. Then, in his 1972 book, "*Natal Settler-Agent*", page 259, Dr John Clark writes that Prof Hattersley has the painting in his possession – having presumably bought it from Alvar Mastins. Before he died in 1976, Prof Hattersley donated the painting to the Durban Local History Museum where it now resides.

Oil painting of the good ship Haidee.

Introduction

The 1850 "York Settlers" were transported from Hull to Port Natal on the good ship *Haidee*. Much has been published about these settlers, but this article focuses on the vessel itself. The name *Haidee* derives from a Greek word, *aidoios*, meaning "modest". Its popularity, particularly in the nineteenth century, derives largely from the name of the beautiful daughter of a pirate in Lord Byron's epic poem, *Don Juan* (1819). *Haidee* is also a heroine in Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844).

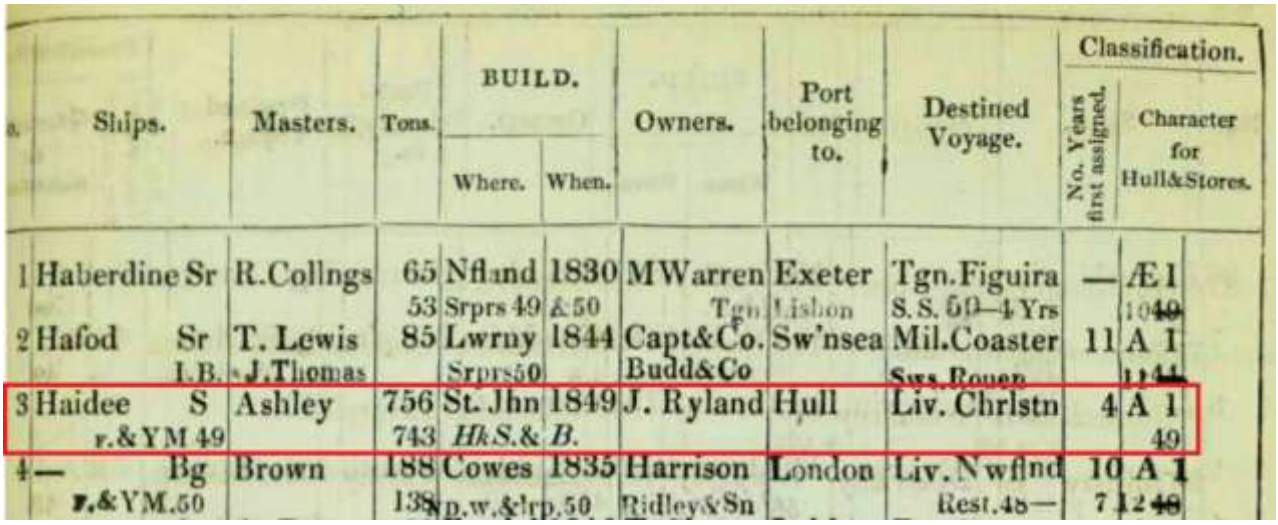
Over the years, there were several ships called *Haidee*, however, the ship in which the 1850 York Settlers sailed was built in 1849 at the Saint John shipyards in New Brunswick, British North America, now Canada. She was a wooden, three-masted vessel displacing about 750 tons.

Right: Haidee construction site, Saint John, New Brunswick.

Acknowledgement: I wish to express my sincere thanks to **Neil Purdon** for his significant input, advice and patience. Without him, I would not have found my way to the critical source materials, vis. the Lloyd's Register of Shipping and the Marryat Code of Signals.

Construction

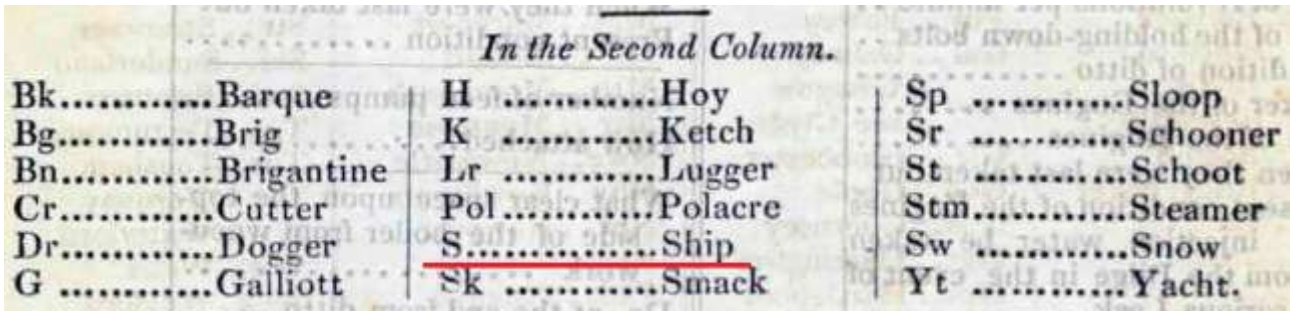
Here is an extract from the Lloyd's Register of Shipping that gives some information about the *Haidee's* construction and other details.



a.	Ships.	Masters.	Tons.	BUILD. Where.	When.	Owners.	Port belonging to.	Destined Voyage.	Classification. No. Years first assigned.	Character for Hull&Stores.
1	Haberdine Sr	R.Collngs	65 53	Nfland Srprs 49	1830 &50	MWarren Tgn.	Exeter Lisbon	Tgn.Figuira S.S. 50—4 Yrs	—	Æ1 1849
2	Hafod Sr I.B.	T. Lewis J.Thomas	85	Lwrny Srprs50	1844	Capt&Co. Budd&Co	Sw'nsea Sws.Rouen	Mil.Coaster	11	A 1 1844
3	Haidee S F.&YM 49	Ashley	756 743	St. Jhn *HkS.&*	1849 *B.*	J. Ryland	Hull	Liv. Chrlstn	4	A 1 49
4	— Bg F.&YM.50	Brown	188 138	Cowes Sp.w.&lrp.50	1835	Harrison Ridley&Sn	London	Liv. Nwfind Rest.48—	10 7	A 1 1848

Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping, 1850. Page 281.[1]

Apart from the obvious, this extract from Lloyd's Register requires some explanation.
The "**S**" after the name *Haidee* in the second column, stands for "Ship" – more about this later.
For the sake of completeness, other categories of vessels are shown in the table below.



In the Second Column.

Bk.....Barque	H .....Hoy	Sp .....Sloop
Bg.....Brig	K .....Ketch	Sr .....Schooner
Bn.....Brigantine	Lr .....Lugger	St .....Schoot
Cr.....Cutter	Pol.....Polacre	Stm.....Steamer
Dr.....Dogger	S.....Ship	Sw .....Snow
G .....Galliott	Sk .....Smack	Yt .....Yacht.

Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping, 1850. Page 38.

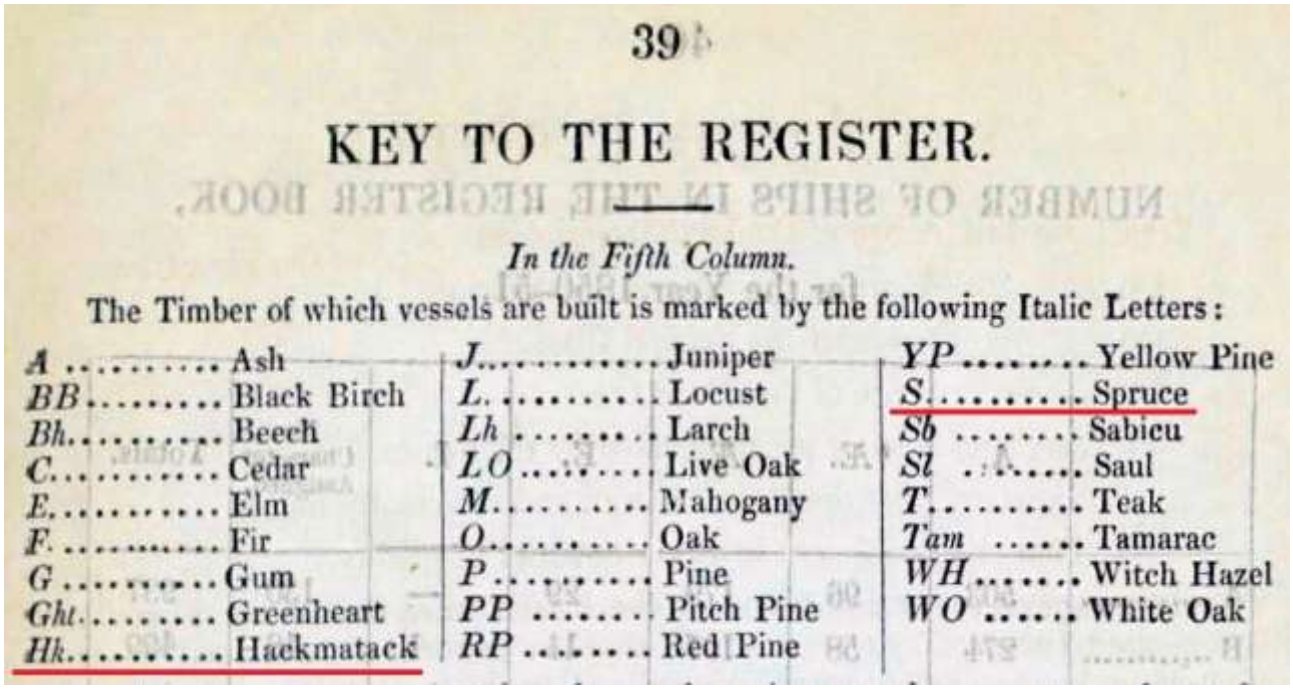
Sheathing. The "**F.&YM 49**" in the second column refers to the sheathing materials, namely "Felt and Yellow Metal 49". Yellow metal, a.k.a. Muntz metal, is a specific form of brass alloy with 60% copper and 40% zinc. The metal plating reduced marine fouling (barnacles, algae, etc), prevented wood boring shipworm and, being smooth, slightly increased the ship's speed.

A layer of felt was usually laid between the wooden hull and the metal plates. This reduced galvanic corrosion by preventing direct contact between iron fastenings in the wood and the metal plating. The "49" refers to 1849 – the year in which this information was last updated.

Tons. The "tons" in the fourth column shows two figures, viz. 756 tons and 743 tons. The first is the measurement "by the old Act" and the second is the measurement "by the new Act, of January, 1836." Interestingly, "tons", short for "gross tons", has nothing to do with the weight of the ship. It referred to the enclosed volume (1 gross ton = 100 cubic feet), volume being a more useful measurement for a cargo ship, rather than its weight.

[1] The 1850 Lloyd's Register may be downloaded from:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ALloyd%27s_Register_of_Shipping_1850.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Timber. The fifth column specifies "**HkS.&B.**" The **Hk** is Hackmatack (American larch), a rot resistant north American conifer widely used for shipbuilding in those times. The **S** is spruce and the **B** is not clearly specified in the table – see below.



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KEY TO THE REGISTER.

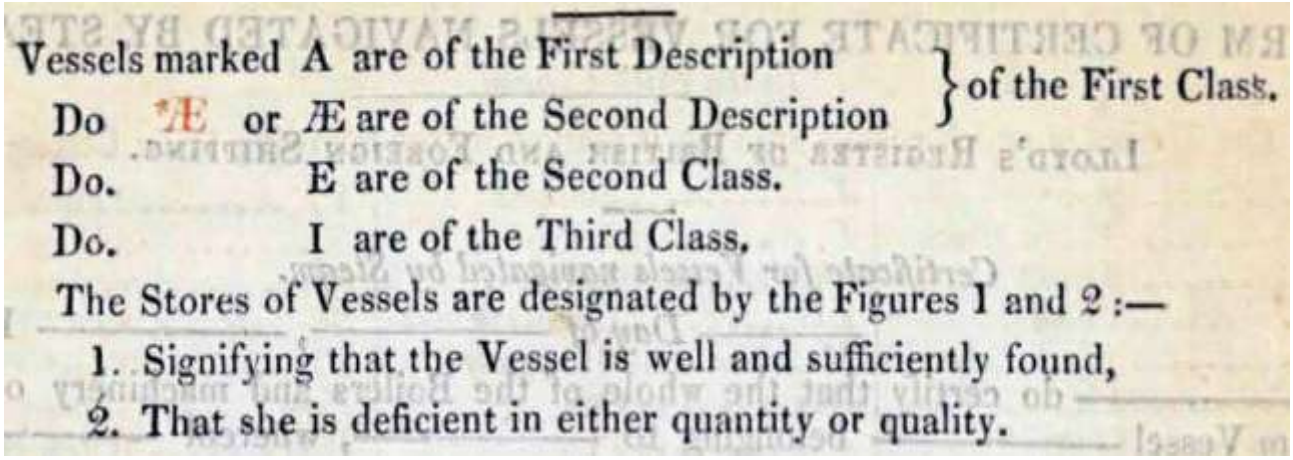
In the Fifth Column.

The Timber of which vessels are built is marked by the following Italic Letters:

A	Ash	*J*	Juniper	*YP*	Yellow Pine
BB	Black Birch	*L*	Locust	*S*	Spruce
Bh	Beech	*Lh*	Larch	*Sb*	Sabicu
C	Cedar	*LO*	Live Oak	*Sl*	Saul
E	Elm	*M*	Mahogany	*T*	Teak
F	Fir	*O*	Oak	*Tam*	Tamarac
G	Gum	*P*	Pine	*WH*	Witch Hazel
Ght	Greenheart	*PP*	Pitch Pine	*WO*	White Oak
Hk	Hackmatack	*RP*	Red Pine		

Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping, 1850. Page 39.

Classification. The entry for the *Haidee* in the last column is "**A 1**". This designates the ship and its stores as being of the highest grade or rating. Again, I have no idea what the "49" in that column signifies. The classifications from highest to lowest are: **A ; *Æ ; Æ ; E ; I** , as described in the following table.



Vessels marked A are of the First Description } of the First Class.
Do *E or Æ are of the Second Description }
Do. E are of the Second Class.
Do. I are of the Third Class.

The Stores of Vessels are designated by the Figures 1 and 2:—

1. Signifying that the Vessel is well and sufficiently found,
2. That she is deficient in either quantity or quality.

Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping, 1850. Page 40.

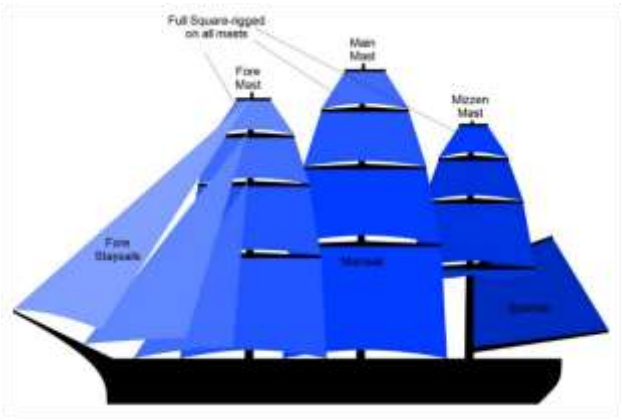
If you are interested in this sort of thing, then the introductory pages of this Lloyd's Register contain far more information than I have given here and make for fascinating reading.

The *Haidee's* Sail Plan

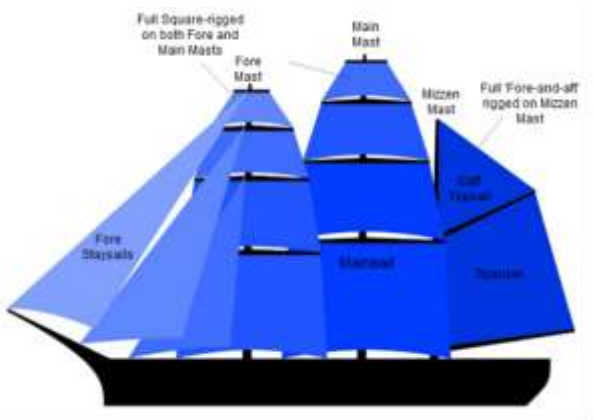
As may be seen in the painting at the top of this document the *Haidee* was square rigged on all three masts and was thus classified as a "**Ship**". Different names were used for three-masted ships, based on how their sails were rigged:[2]

- **Ship**: Square-rigged on **all three** masts.
- **Barque**: Square-rigged on the **first two** masts; fore-and-aft rigged on the third.
- **Barquentine**: Square-rigged on the **first** mast; fore-and-aft rigged on the other two.
- **Schooner**: Fore-and-aft rigged on **all** masts (though some may carry square topsails).

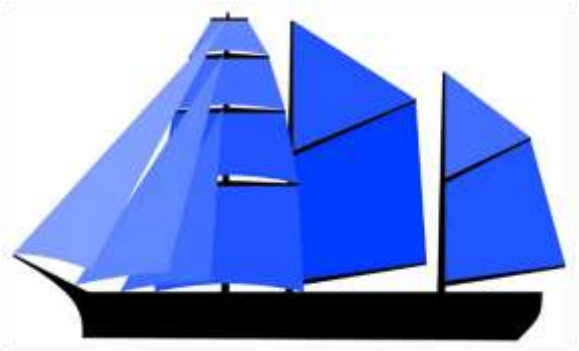
Square rigs provided better downwind speed whilst fore-and-aft rigs for provided better manoeuvrability. (See diagrams below.)



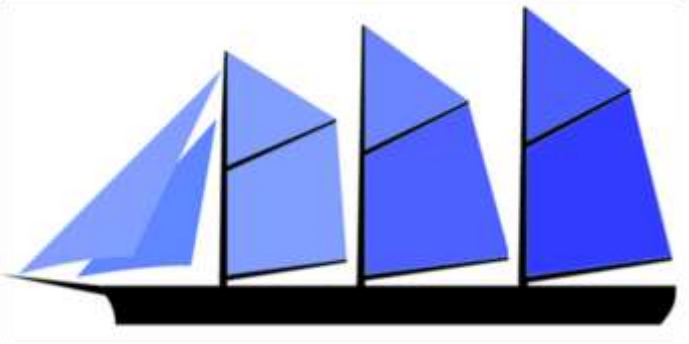
Ship



Barque



Barquentine



Schooner

On each mast of a fully rigged ***Ship***, the "square" sails, from the largest and lowest, and moving up the mast, are the ***mainsail*** *(course)****, topsail, topgallant*** and, if the mast is tall enough, then ***royal, skysail*** and ***moonraker*** *(raker)*. Triangular ***jibs*** are used at the front, with a gaff-rigged ***spanker*** on the rear mast. This arrangement underwent various modifications over time. If you are particularly interested, you can refer to Roland's Ship Building Blog[3] for a detailed and fully labelled diagram.

Trivia: "Square" sails are roughly rectangular. The "square" refers to the sails' orientation, which is generally rigged square relative to the mast and to the centreline of the ship.

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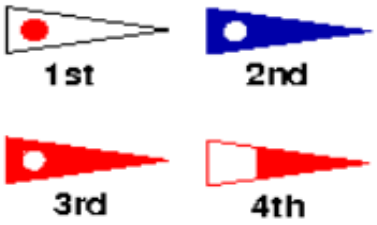
[2] Robson, Andy, *Merchant Sailing Ship Types*. https://www.yourfamilyhistorian.co.uk/post/merchant-sailing-ship-types

[3] https://rolandsmodelshipbuilding.com/2019/05/08/names-of-sails-and-masts-on-a-fully-rigged-ship/

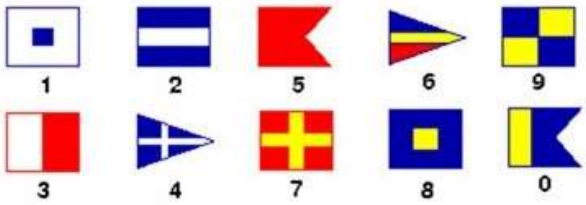
Flags

The bottom flag shown in the painting is colloquially called the Red Duster or, more formally, as the Red Ensign. It serves to identify a merchant or passenger ship as British.

The top five flags shown in the painting were used in the Marryat Code of Signals.[4] This enabled ships to be identified and to communicate with one another and with port authorities. A copy of the book listing all the relevant details was carried by any interested party. The topmost flag was usually an "indicator pennant" (~4 x 18 feet) which identified the nature of the "number flags" (~6 x 8 feet) below it. In this painting the *Haidee* is flying the "**first** indicator pennant" which indicates that the four flags below are the ship's identification number.



The next four flags represent numbers – in this case, the numbers **4 8 0 2** which was the *Haidee's* official registration number.



MERCHANT VESSELS. PART III.

FIRST DISTINGUISHING PENDANT

To be hoisted over the Number, or at some other Mast-head.

4798 Habnah	4839 Hannah Maria	3P Harriet Armitage, 194
4801 Hadassah	4850 More	
Haddington, st. 5108	Salkeld, 4698	3P Cann, 1605
3P Hafis, 1973	4851 & Mary	Hope, 7546
4802 Haidée	4852 Hannibal	Humble, 4659
Haiti, 7834	4853 Hanover	4903 L.
Haitienne, 8275	3P Hans & Christine, 1602	4905 Nash
4803 Halcyon	4856 Hansa	O'Swald, 8957
4805 Halifax	4857 Hanseat	3P Ralli, 1674
		4906 Scott

*The Haidee's official registration number, **4802**, as listed in this extract from Marryat's Code of Signals.*[5]

Note: In the 1850s the word "pennant" was commonly spelt "pendant" although today, "pendant" has a different meaning.

[4] Captain Frederick Marryat's Code of Signals: https://archive.org/details/acodesignalsfor00marrgoog/mode/2up

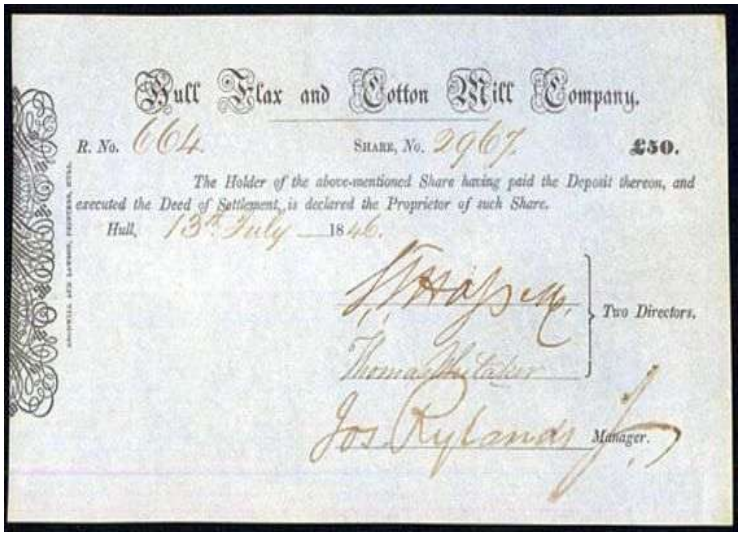
[5] Marryat's Code of Signals, 1851, pg 76 which may be viewed at: https://archive.org/details/TheUniversalCodeOfSignals/page/n75/mode/2up

Crew, Delivery and Owner

Apart from the master, usually called "Captain" as a mark of respect, a ship of this size generally required two or three mates, surgeon, carpenter, boatswain (bosun), and around 20–30 crew. Captain Ashley, master of the brand new ship, sailed her from Saint John, across the Atlantic to Hull – the home port of the new owner, Joseph Rylands. As indicated by "**Liv**" and "**Chrlstn**" in the penultimate column in the Lloyd's Register, the *Haidee* was scheduled to call in at Liverpool and Charleston, Cornwall on route to Hull.

Joseph Rylands, who had purchased the newly built ship, was the eldest son of the wealthy Rylands conglomerate, Rylands & Sons. In 1836 he left the family business and founded the Hull Flax & Cotton Mills. He also personally owned a fleet of ships, usually engaged in trading on the India and China routes.

As has been reported in the many accounts of Henry Boast's 1850 York emigrant scheme, Joseph Rylands was a hard-nosed businessman whose intransigence caused much hardship for the emigrant party as a whole, and for Henry Boast in particular.


Hull Flax and Cotton Mill Company.

R. No. 664. Share, No. 2967. £50.

The Holder of the above-mentioned Share having paid the Deposit thereon, and executed the Deed of Settlement, is declared the Proprietor of such Share.

Hull, 13th July 1846.

Two Directors.

Jos. Rylands Manager.

Right: A share certificate for the Hull Flax and Cotton Mill Company signed by Joseph Rylands.

1850 Voyage to Port Natal

The ship initially charted from Joseph Rylands was the 520 ton *Pallas*. This proved too small for the 245 or so passengers and was replaced by the *Haidee* which finally departed from Hull on 10 July 1880 and arrived at Port Natal on 7 October 1850, after a relatively uneventful voyage of almost three months.

This is the most notable voyage of the *Haidee* and a considerable amount has been written about it, much of it being based on the diaries kept by two of the passengers, Martha (Patty) Lofthouse and Jane Plummer. This being the case, I feel that it is not necessary to elaborate any further here.

Later Sale and Trading

The transport of emigrants to Port Natal was essentially a one-off. Rylands mainly used the vessel for trading on the India and China routes. Around 1860 he sold the *Haidee* to T. Hobbs of Liverpool where she was used in the trans-Atlantic trade.

Adieu

Haidee was lost in the mid-Atlantic on 19 April 1863 – not an unusual outcome for wooden sailing ships of her era, but the details of her last voyage and exact nature of her demise are not known. It is more than likely that she was lost in a storm at sea.